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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

HYPNOTISM AND JUSTICE.

"Another phase of hypnotism in its relation to crime has just been developed out in Minnesota. The accused murderer is to be put into the hypnotic state by a number of experts, and every word uttered by him in that condition will be taken down in shorthand and used as evidence at the trial. It is claimed by the defence that the accused committed the murder under hypnotic influence. So, if his story told to the physicians while under their influence agrees with the one told in his waking hours, it will be held that his original story is true."

To the great majority of newspaper readers the logic and justice in the foregoing quotation will appeal strongly as wise and sensible. Will it so appeal to the thinking man, as well as the experimenter in hypnotism and psychology? It is to be doubted that it will, and for the better attainment of justice, in so far as hypnotism is concerned, I offer this plea.

As is now generally acknowledged, suggestion plays the most important rôle in hypnotism, and as the phenomenon of suggestion forms the basis for the following argument in this particular case, it may be well to review briefly what the word may exactly mean, by a short description of the mental attitude of the hypnotized immediately before and after the suggestion is given him by the hypnotizer. Ignoring for the present the particular case in point, the Minnesota murder, and omitting also the various common manipulations for inducing the hypnotic sleep, we will begin by a consideration of the subject as he sits before us in the state generally described as the somnambulistic. Picture him, then, as immobile, deaf, dumb and blind to all except the words and acts of the operator. No voluntary act or word is ever manifest, and until suggestion is supplied by the operator he remains perfectly passive and seemingly incapable of any movement or activity whatsoever. He is absolutely without volition, being in a state ready for the fulfillment of any suggestion, and upon the nature of this suggestion will depend his subsequent act and speech. For illustration, let us imagine his brain extirpated while the cut ends of both sensory and motor nerve fibres are in connection with the nerve cells in the brain of the operator. Thus we may explain his utter lack of volition and increased power of receiving suggestion.

Suggestion consists in giving thought to the subject for action or speech, and will power for its accomplishment. It may be communicated by word, or by gesture capable of interpretation by the subject into manifold activities. As the verbal suggestion alone concerns us, it only will be described. The subject is commanded by the operator to perform certain acts—to sing, to dance, etc.,—all of which he readily obeys. He is told he is an animal, and immediately he drops on all-fours; he is handed a hot iron with the assur-

ance it will not burn him, he grasps it without sensation ; he is misinformed as to the name of his most intimate friend, and so tenaciously does he cling to the new name that his friend cannot undeceive him. And so on, through the long list familiar to all who have witnessed the hypnotic *séance*. But let us dwell a moment upon the spirit in which the subject performs these various acts. By the most superficial observer the intentness with which the subject responds to suggestion is noticeable. And well it may be, for nowhere out of hypnotism or disease is such concentration obvious. It is a concentration so absolute and entire that it almost passes the boundaries of our conception. While acting under hypnotic suggestion, it seems as though every atom of mental energy is used in the fulfilling of that suggestion, whether it be sensory or motor. For how else may we explain the common phenomenon of insensibility to pain, etc. ? It would seem scarcely possible that the integral parts of the nerve fibres are disturbed, or that it is a material alteration in them which causes their inhibition, for upon subsequent waking their normal functions are immediately restored. Every explanation based upon physiological ground is insufficient or erroneous. We have in the subject a simple, entire concentration of mental power, either for act or sensation, or for the cessation of one or both. So strong and undivided is this concentration that, beyond the carrying out of the suggestion itself, there is absolutely nothing else—no sensory nor motor impulses, no thought nor will, no question as to the fitness of the suggestion nor attempt to do other than obey it. Moreover, in a good subject, the obedience is complete and perfect.

Let me now recall briefly the entire lack of volition before suggestion, while the subject is in the somnambulistic state ; also be it understood, no matter how often the subject may be hypnotized, upon each succeeding sleep just so soon as the somnambulistic state appears, all volition will certainly disappear. Without suggestion the subject will remain absolutely passive, for, in short, he is robbed of his will and incapable of any sign whatsoever of either physical or psychical power. His subsequent acts depend entirely upon suggestion and particular acts upon the nature of the particular suggestion.

With this brief *résumé* I think we may turn to the case in point, the Minnesota experiment. At the very outset, however, we are confronted by a phenomenon so utterly unprecedented that I think it wise to notice it, although it does not enter into the argument of this paper, for the reason that it is ignored by the experts in Minnesota. We learn from the article in the newspaper that the accused tells a *waking story* of the murder committed while under hypnotic influence. In my own experience, and that of an associate, I have never met with a subject who, upon waking, could remember or relate any of the numerous actions performed while under hypnotic influence, nor can I find record of such a case in a tolerably wide reading in the literature of hypnotism. But as the above fact is seemingly unnoticed by the experts in Minnesota, we will, for the sake of my argument, consider the waking story of the murderer true: That he has committed the murder under hypnotic influence and remembers the deed with its detail.

The question now rises, If his story told under the second hypnosis agrees with his waking story, will that circumstance prove his waking story to be true ? I do not think it will. Another conclusion might seem very reasonable, I admit ; but in this second hypnosis are we to forget the immerse power of suggestion ?

Let us remember upon the culmination of the second somnambulist state we have a *new* subject in so far as volition goes. He is immobile, deaf, dumb and blind as the type quoted above. From the hypnotizer he must receive the impulse to talk, to tell his story, as would any new subject. He will *volunteer* nothing in word or act. Consequently we recognize he will not repeat the desired story, his waking story. Indeed, he will but sit passive, waiting the impulse his own mind cannot supply. Suggestion must now be given him by the experts to draw out his story, which may convict or acquit him. His whole mind will respond to that suggestion with the utter concentration I have above attempted to describe. This suggestion will govern and rule his thought, his speech, his story. If the suggestion from the experts bid him repeat the story of the crime, he will obey; if it bid him deny the deed, he will do so vehemently; if, in the progress of his denial, a new and contradictory suggestion is given, he will accept it and heartily accuse himself.

H. MERRIMAN STEELE.

THE CONDITIONS OF GOLD PRODUCTION.

In the January number of the REVIEW the Director of the Mint indulges in a characteristic commentary upon the statistics of gold production. Mr. Preston does not seem to possess an accurate knowledge of the conditions under which the figures, of which he writes, are created.

The matter is an important one, and though the writer may not be competent to take part in the public discussion of economic theories, yet as a mining engineer he asks to be permitted to correct certain ill-founded conceptions concerning one of the main factors determining the solution of the great monetary problem of our day.

The Director of the Mint takes pains to controvert Prof. Edouard Suess, and goes so far as to state that not one of the eminent Austrian's conclusions has been fulfilled. He denies that the increased production of gold goes hand in hand with geographical discovery. All the chequered history of gold mining proves Mr. Preston to be wrong. Is not the output of South Africa to-day the consequence of the geographical discoveries of yesterday? Did not the development of the mineral resources of the Dark Continent come as the result of its exploration by the bands of travellers who followed in the footsteps of Livingstone and Stanley? Has not the penetration of the deserts of Western Australia given us Coolgardie and Cue? And, coming nearer home, is not the largest production of Colorado's increasing annual yield derived from the youngest of its many gold mining districts? In direct opposition to Mr. Preston I would corroborate Professor Suess, and maintain that the newness of a gold mining district is usually synonymous with productiveness and that exhaustion accompanies age. Remember that Europe was once the great gold-producing region of the world; that Dacia was a golden storehouse to the Roman, and that at an earlier period Hannibal got the sinews of war out of the gold mines of Spain. Where are they now? The former contributes a dribble, the latter are a tale in history.

The Director of the Mint, in contradiction to Professor Suess, submits that in South Africa it has been demonstrated that the gold contents of the ore increase with depth. To a mining engineer, experienced in gold mining and conversant with its vicissitudes, this is a surprising statement. The theory that lodes become richer in depth is a vain imagination of the visionary com-